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THE PRIESTLY OFFICE: A PASTORAL LETTER TO THE
CLERGY OF NORTH CAROLINA BY THEIR DIOCESAN

By

Levi Silliman Ives



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THE PRIESTLY OFFICE:

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PASTORAL LETTER

TO

THE CLERGY OF NORTH CAROLINA,

BY THEIR DIOCESAN,

THE

RT. REV. L. SILLIMAN IVES, D. D.

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PASTORAL LETTER.

TO THE CLERGY OF THE DIOCESE OF NORTH CAROLINA.

DEAR BRETHREN: By the providence of God, I was unable the last spring to fulfil my purpose of presenting to you, in convention assembled, the important truths set forth in this Letter, on *The Office of Priesthood*. Convinced of the peculiar necessity of these truths to the present time, and their fitness as a preface to others, which, to further the "obedience of faith," I feel constrained to address to my whole diocese, I hereby commend them to your earnest and prayerful consideration, and through you to your respective congregations.

"Convinced," I say, "of the peculiar necessity of these truths to the present time," let me not in the outset be misunderstood. It is not that I have discovered any special resistance, in our day, to the due exercise of the priestly functions. But it is that I feel these functions have not been duly exercised by ourselves, who are entrusted with "the ministry of reconciliation." That one and all of us, either from

the continual pressure from without, or from opposing principles and influences within, have sadly failed in the fulfilment of our sacred office and trust. It is true, we may not have been guilty of keeping men back from Baptism, Confirmation, and the holy Eucharist. And this would be much if understood as meant by Christ, and received by the early saints. But what is it now? what is it as too generally expressed in our own work and in the lives of our people? Let us take our liturgical offices for Baptism, Confirmation, and the Holy Communion, to our closets, and on our knees examine each part of them—mark the spiritual system they unfold—the deep self-consecration to God which they require—the high spiritual gifts they witness to—the heart-searching vows they record—the spirit of Christ, the education of conscience, the thorough self-examination, the earnest self-discipline, the heavenly pursuits, the exalted attainments they imply; how, by the power of a new nature, of a life-giving union with the incarnate God, of “a life hid with Christ in God,” they seem to raise the Christian above, and as by a great gulf, separate him from the unbaptized or the professed votaries of sense; and then with the actual state of our people before us, ask ourselves whether this awful failure to realize in their spirit and lives that which is so solemnly taught in the divine sacraments to which they have come may not, in a humiliating degree, be owing to our own want of earnestness and fidelity in the discharge of our priestly functions? And whether

this does not more than justify your Bishop in here setting before your minds the nature and reality of these functions, with some of the weighty duties which necessarily result.

You have received "the Holy Ghost for the office and work of priests in the Church of God."

All authority in the Church is from God, to be exercised for God. To check in us the sin of presumption and cultivate within us the grace of fidelity, this great truth must be kept before our minds. Men, set apart for holy things in the Church, are sometimes led to think themselves in some sort proprietors of the Church; as having a right to impress upon it their own wisdom and skill; or to modify and build it up in their own way. Whereas "all things are of God." The Church, is "the Church of the living God,"—founded by Him and to be ruled by Him. Even Jesus, the Divine Head of the Church, did nothing of Himself,—nothing as of His own underrived authority and power. "All power is *given* unto me," He says. "As the Father gave me commandment even so I do." Hence "the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins." If it be so with the master, how much more with the servant! If "God manifested in the flesh" was under necessity, as our great High Priest, of submitting in all things to the will of Him that sent Him; what must be the depth of our self-subjugation as ministers commissioned by His authority, and acting in his stead, for his body the Church!

Our first and highest care, then, is to keep before our minds the divine power by which we act, and the divine will made known as the guide and end of our action : that “all things are of God ;” that all, in the scheme of redemption, sprang from the depths of His infinite love, and was fashioned in every essential feature, by His sovereign will—through whatever channel, or by whatever agency, it has been enjoined upon men : nothing being left for them, no matter what may be their place in the Church, but faith, and submission, and obedience ; that all truth in the religion of Christ is the mind of God, over which no other mind unauthorized and uncontrolled by God, can have the smallest power ; that the Church, which embodies and sets forth that truth, is the institution of God, concerning which, and in which, no one can, without great hazard to himself, speak or act, except he be commissioned from above.

Another caution is to be observed. Whatever power may be committed to us, as Christ’s ministers, can be effectual, in its exercise, only within the limits of His laws, and through the merits of His perfect sacrifice. “God hath reconciled us to Himself by *Jesus Christ*,” though He “hath committed to us the ministry of this reconciliation.” So that whatever terms He may have affixed to the covenant of redemption—whatever priestly acts he may have made necessary to our union with Him, or life in Him ; or whatever good works we may be required

or encouraged to do, “to turn away his displeasure and perfect holiness in His fear ;” all must be submitted to and done by the aid of His Spirit ; and draw their entire value and efficacy from the rich fountain of His blood. Let us be careful then to bear this in mind, in all our doings, however essential to “the obedience of faith,” lest we be guilty of ascribing to them, the virtue which cometh only from the all-prevailing merits of our incarnate Lord.

Still God hath made men the instruments of salvation in His Church—hath empowered them to act, as His representatives, in reconciling sinners unto Himself, and fitting them for his eternal fellowship. For to them hath He committed “the ministry of reconciliation.”

Let us see how this is. The history of it cannot fail to throw light upon its nature and reality. This history begins with Christ, “the Head over all things unto the Church, which is His body.” Having received from God the Father, “all power in heaven and earth,” He came to set up His kingdom and bring men back to His communion and love. The first step was to humble Himself, and take our nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin ; thus presenting Himself to us as God and man, with his invisible divinity clothed in His visible humanity. Here, then, we have in the person of our great High Priest, the *beginning* of the Church in its perfection on earth, and a type or representation of what the Church was ever after to be—a union of the divine and human

—God uniting Himself with man, that man might again be united with God—united not only by an interchange of will, but by a positive interchange of nature. The Head of the Church is God manifest in the flesh. The body, surely, cannot, in nature, be different from the Head. If the Head be both human and divine, so must be the body. If the Head be thus both visible and invisible, so must be the body. Hence, according to St. Paul, the end of our being called into the Church and placed under its ministry, is, “that we may come unto a *perfect* man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ ;” “may grow up into Him in all things, which is the Head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.” Here is a union between Christ and His Church, like unto that which He Himself expressed when He said, “I am the vine, ye are the branches.” But the vine cannot be essentially different from the branches.

We see then that the relation which Christ bears to His Church forbids the idea of any important difference, in nature, between them ; and hence requires that where one is divine and human, the other in a certain sense, and to certain degree, must be divine and human also ; where one is both visible and invisible, the other must be the same ; justifying the language of St. Peter, where he affirms that by “the ex-

ceeding great and precious promises of the Gospel," or by their fulfilment in ourselves, "we are made partakers of the divine nature."

The reconciliation, therefore, of man to God by Jesus Christ, the ministry of which is committed to us, is a much more exalted and vital union, than is sometimes supposed. A union implying not only that the sacrifice of the incarnate Son, avails to our justification; but also that the gracious communication of His nature, puts us into a justified state—makes us again one with Himself; not so much covers us with His righteousness, as fills us with His righteousness; not declares us just on the ground of his own justice merely, but makes us just by the infused power of that justice; not stands without us an ideal holiness, but is formed within us a real holiness. He became the Son of Man, that, by a mysterious union with Him, we might become the sons of God; condescended to be born of a Virgin, that we might have a new birth into Himself; to take our nature, that we might be made partakers of His.

Here then is the foundation of the ministry of reconciliation—a union to be established and perfected between Christ and redeemed sinners, calling for the intervention of the priestly office.

The Son of God became incarnate; offered Himself a sacrifice for sin; rose from the dead for our justification; made the Church his body; placed Himself at its head; breathed into it His spirit and life; commanded men to "be born again" into His

fellowship ; to be “made alive unto God in Him ;” to become “members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones ;” and was then “received up into glory.” But who was left to carry out this glorious design of his incarnation—to fulfill the ministry of His reconciliation with man ? It is true, the Holy Ghost was given to the world to “convince of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment ;” was given to the Church to “sanctify and cleanse it, that it might be a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing ;” but God hath ordained that the Holy Ghost shall act upon the world, and in His Church, through an outward, visible agency. Now what is that agency ? Who was commissioned to act in Christ’s stead after His ascension—to exercise His authority and dispense instrumentally the manifold gifts of His grace ? Was each individual to act for himself—to be his own “Prophet, Priest, and King ?” To teach himself—accept his own submission—remit his own sins—impose his own discipline—be his own judge ? St. Paul answers this question in the following words : “And He (Christ) gave some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the Faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

And we see how Christ did this. As He was

about to be taken up into Heaven, He called the eleven disciples to Him and said : “ All power is given unto me in Heaven and earth, go ye **THEREFORE**, disciple all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,—teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” “ As my Father sent me, even *so* send I you.” “ And he breathed on them and said : Receive ye the Holy Ghost ; whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them ; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.”

Who can listen to these words and not feel that Christ, before His ascension, ordained a living, visible ministry in His Church, and committed to that ministry an awful power to be exercised for the comfort, and edification, and salvation of its members ! Let us examine into the nature and fulness of this power thus originally conveyed. “ All power is given unto *me*—go ye **THEREFORE**.” “ As my Father sent me, even *so send I you*. This language teaches, as plainly as it is possible for language to teach, that with whatever ministerial power Christ came invested from the Father, with that same power did His first ministers go forth invested from Himself. The words of a commission, from its very nature, must be taken literally, according to their natural order and force. And the words we are considering, let us bear in mind, are those of Christ’s commission

to His disciples. Now what do these words import? or what are the special powers they, define or may, from the subsequent claims and acts of the Apostles, be safely supposed to embrace?

The first of these is the *power to remit sins*. A power inseparable from the idea of that ministry, whose object it is to reconcile sinners to God through Christ. Sin makes them His enemies and interposes the chief bar to their restoration to His fellowship. This, then, first of all, must be remitted. Its curse taken away; its dominion overthrown. We ought not to be surprised, therefore, that the first and largest power, yea, in one sense the sum of all others, committed to the ministry of reconciliation, is the power to remit sins through Christ. Not only to preach the Gospel which provides for their remission; not only to declare that remission upon contrition and confession, but also to do priestly acts by which, through the virtue of Christ's sacrifice, the pardon of sin, and the grace to resist it, are conveyed to the soul. At the head of these stands *baptism*. This sacrament, where due qualifications exist, takes away sin. "Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." "Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins."

But sins may be committed after baptism—committed against the vows of the holy covenant made to God, as represented by His ministers. Hence they were entrusted with power to remit, upon true repentance, such sins, and restore the offenders to the forfeited blessings of their baptismal state.

This power of absolution is not only necessary to the solemn relation which the priesthood bears to the baptized, but has always been held by the one Catholic Church as having been explicitly entrusted to the Apostles by the words of their commission—"Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them," &c.

This remission of sins, too, was more or less connected with the sacrifice offered in the Holy Eucharist. The Apostolic Church was led to this conviction by the words of her Divine Head at the institution of this blessed sacrament ; and hence always encouraged those who came to it with a penitent heart and lively faith, to expect forgiveness of all their sins. Besides, the sacrificial character of the sacrament itself, furnished to all true penitents a pledge of such forgiveness.

In addition, however, to the remission of sins, dependent upon these priestly acts, there were also, as dependent upon the same acts, a new-birth into Christ's Kingdom—a vital union with Himself—a participation of His spirit and life. Who can, for one moment, doubt this, that has not received his impressions from other sources than the teaching of Christ and his Apostles? Who can doubt it, that has not shut from his understanding and heart, the true force of such words as these? "Except one be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." "I am the Vine, ye are the branches." "He that eateth

me, even he shall live by me." "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." Thus was it when the ministerial commission was first given.

But our Lord embraced still other things under this commission ; authority to teach was one. Having empowered His disciples to baptize all nations, He gave them commission and command to teach their converts all things which he had taught them ; commission and command to " feed his flock ;" to " feed his sheep and lambs." So that instruction to be right, and safe, and sure of God's blessing, was, in the Church of the Apostles, to be given under ministerial commission.

Besides, to give the young disciple power to resist manfully the world, the flesh and the devil, and stability in " the faith once for all delivered to the saints," there was instituted the further rite of laying on of hands. This rite, in its sacramental character, was first received, as shadowed forth in the descent of the Holy Ghost upon our blessed Lord after His baptism, and as enjoined in the teaching and exemplified in the practice of His immediate disciples. And although its administration was confined to the highest order of the ministry, it had respect in a degree to the priestly function of that order, sufficiently so at least, to justify us in classing it under the priestly powers at first committed to the holy ministry.

We have then before us this solemn fact—that the

forgiveness of sins, the engrafting of sinners into Christ, and training their souls in the life of faith for the eternal fellowship of heaven, were entrusted by our Lord to the ministry of reconciliation, and that this ministry was committed to the Apostles. In their day, therefore, it is clear that if men would be saved, they must seek salvation from Christ through the priestly office. That the first ministers stood "in Christ's stead;" and in such a sense as that whosoever submitted to their just authority and received the blessings which they, as His instruments, had to give, submitted to Christ Himself, and received His grace in the only way of His appointment.

The question now is, and it is a grave one, does this ministerial power still continue in the Church?

1st. That the terms of the commission seem to require an affirmative answer can hardly be denied; as by these terms "every creature" of "the whole world" to the "end of time," is placed under apostolic authority. The Apostles having been commissioned to "preach the Gospel to every creature;" to "baptize all nations," and to rest in the assurance that Christ, the Divine Head of the Church, would be with them "always, even unto the end of the world;" it is impossible to conceive how this could be, except by an unfailing transmission of the priestly power thus committed to them, to all future ages of the Church.

2d. Besides, the necessity of this priestly pow-

er, if we are to be guided by the Gospel and not our own fancies, is as great now as it was in the days of the Apostles. This necessity is founded in the spiritual condition of man, as revealed and provided for by Almighty God. And this condition has not changed. The necessity of baptism, authoritative teaching, absolution from post-baptismal sin, confirmation, and the Holy Eucharist, and other things, at first committed to "the ministry of reconciliation," seems to have increased rather than lessened since the death of St. John. It is as true now as ever, that "Except one be born of water, and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." As true now as ever that "the priest's lips are to keep knowledge, and the people to receive the law at his mouth." As true now as ever, that man sinning mortally, or so as to hazard his spiritual life, after baptism, stands in need of absolution from that priesthood to whom Christ said, "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them." As true now as ever, that the reception of the Holy Ghost by "the laying on of hands," is necessary to the Christian's confirmation in "the principles of the doctrine of Christ." As true now as ever, that "except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." And if these blessings could not be reached, in the days of the Apostles, except through the Priesthood, how can they now? Has a new commission been given, in place of the apostolic commission? If so, what and where is that commission?

Or has God revealed to us any modification or change in the old commission, by virtue of which we may safely deny to the priesthood now, the ministerial powers entrusted to the Apostles? If so, what and where is that revelation? The truth is, God has made no such modification or change; and man makes it at a terrible risk.

We profess to "believe one Catholic and Apostolic Church." Not only its *existence*, but its *truth*, as the living, speaking, directing body of Christ; that body in which we have our spiritual being, our knowledge, our nourishment unto everlasting life. Now has that body ever been without the priestly function, exercised in the way we have pointed out, by the Apostles? Has she ever relinquished her claim to it? Has she ever lived a day, since becoming "the pillar and ground of the truth," since being invested with "the ministry of reconciliation," without asserting her possession, in the actual exercise, of its high powers? Individuals and communities, impatient under her restraints, and reckless of their own salvation, have, it is true, resisted her claim and broken from her authority; but has she, at any time, been faithless to herself? doubted of her priestly powers, or failed to exert them for the salvation of men? powers received from her divine head, and transmitted by unailing succession?

I will not do you the dishonor of intimating, by a single word, the need of an answer to these questions. You know the history of the Church. You have

before you the expressive and impressive ordinal of our own branch of it. Hear the preface: "These three orders of the ministry, bishops, priests, and deacons, have ever been in the Church of Christ, and were ever had in such reverend estimation, that no man might presume to execute any of them except he were first called, tried, examined, approved and admitted thereto by lawful authority." Hear the office itself, where it solemnly admonishes the candidate for the priesthood, "to have always in remembrance into how high a dignity, how weighty an office and charge he is called—that is to say, to be a messenger, watchman, and steward of the Lord—to teach and premonish, to feed and provide for the Lord's family; that they may be saved through Christ forever." Surely if such be the dignity and end of the priesthood now, it can have lost none of its apostolic character and force.

3d. But more than this, the gifts and graces first bestowed upon the ministry, show its peculiar and unchanging character,—give it an individuality and distinctness, and prominence, consistent only with a fixed and essential institution. When our blessed Lord was about to enter upon His ministerial office, the Holy Ghost descended upon Him in a bodily shape. When about to send forth his disciples to execute the same office, "He breathed on them and said, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." Now this extraordinary communication had doubtless a two-fold object, *First*, to set apart and qualify for the holy

ministry—to elevate a peculiar grade—to fit for a peculiar work : and hence to give a stamp of divinity and authority not to be effaced ; to infuse into the office a high and abiding life, and to invest it with a sacramental dignity and power. *Secondly*, to entrust to this office gifts for sinful men—to impart to Christ’s stewards “ the manifold grace of God.” The gifts, which the Divine Head of the Church, at His ascension “ received for men,” were, as St. Paul represents, to be dispensed to them by the “ ministry of reconciliation.” Hence, they who first exercised this ministry, claimed to be the channels of such gifts. St. Paul desires to go to Rome, that he “ might impart to his converts some spiritual gift ;” and speaks of them all as being “ partakers of his grace,” which really was nothing more or less than the grace of Christ entrusted to him for the penitent and faithful. And this ministry thus endowed, was given to edify the Church—not for a period limited to the age of the Apostles, but “ *till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man.*”

Upon this principle is it, and upon this alone, (for there is no other that can justify us,) that our branch of the Catholic Church still uses, at the ordination of priests, the language which our blessed Lord used in commissioning the Disciples—“ Receive ye the Holy Ghost, for the office and work of a priest in the Church of God ; whose sins thou dost remit, they

are remitted unto them ; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained.”

When we consider, then, that the commission first given by our Lord embraced the whole world, and reached to the end of time, and that no other commission to minister in holy things has ever been given to His Church—when we consider the end of this ministry towards the children of God—towards the Spouse and Body of Christ—when we reflect that “the one Catholic and Apostolic Church,” in whom we profess our Faith, hath ever owned and exercised this ministry—and that for its “office and work” she still, in the most solemn way, asserts her authority from Christ, to impart, in His words, the gift of the Holy Ghost : we dare not doubt that the same priestly power, with which the incarnate Son came invested from the Father, and with which he so solemnly invested His Disciples, still continues for the recovery of sinners—for the perfecting of saints—for the edifying of the His Body, the Church.

Our *first* duty, then, my brethren, is to consider seriously *whose* ministers we are. If by any earthly power we had been put into our office, then might we safely yield in the fulfilment of it, to earthly authority or influence—might inquire for the will, and be subservient to the tastes, and prejudices, and caprices, of sinful men. But, as God has commissioned and sent us to do *His will*—put us in trust with “the ministry of reconciliation,” for the faithful

fulfillment of which, He will make us give account at the judgment of the great day ; you will perceive “ that it is a very small thing,” as St. Paul saith, “ to be judged by man’s judgment, if we do but keep a good conscience before God.” In order to this, we must seek above all things, to honor God before the world to whom we are sent—must show our conviction of the dignity and awful solemnity of our trust, by our humility, our meekness, our wisdom, our self-discipline, our deadness to the world, our strict and steady imitation of Him, who clothed us with His authority and breathed upon us His spirit, and left us His bright and spotless example, as the first bishop and shepherd of our souls. To gain this deep sense of the reality and weight of our divine mission, we have need to observe more retirement from the world and more unreserved devotion to God. To stand more aloof from those scenes and influences, which we are called upon to control or resist, and be in close communion with Him, whose authority we represent,—whose will we are sent to do, whose Spirit is our life, and strength and consolation. “ The Holy Ghost given us for our office and work,” must first make that work effectual upon ourselves ; must not only set apart our persons to holy things, but take possession of our thoughts, affections, desires and powers, and appropriate them all in all their strength, to the ministry of God.

We see then the reason why the Eternal Son, who first took this ministry, so often retired from the

society of men, to some “desert place,” where by fasting and prayer and divine contemplations, He might teach us, as partakers in His ministry, how to bring ourselves into higher communion with God the Father, throw off more effectually the power of the wicked world, and yield ourselves more unreservedly to His sway.

Our *next* duty, beloved, is to have ever imprinted on our minds, the end of our ministry towards the children of God—towards the spouse and body of Christ.” That it is emphatically “the ministry of *reconciliation*.” That “all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself, by Jesus Christ, and *hath committed to us the ministry of reconciliation*.” That we have received priestly authority from Christ through “Apostolic succession,”—not to lord it over God’s people, but to become their servants for Jesus’ sake”—the divinely appointed instruments of their salvation ; to lead them from sin, from condemnation, and death, and “bring them unto Christ, who is our life ;” and to watch over them, “watch for their souls as they that must give account.” We must make our people feel this—feel that our ministry is a blessing sent from Heaven to them. That we have no more control over it—no more liberty to change it, or suppress its powers, than they themselves have. That it is ordained by God to apply, through the power of the Holy Ghost, the efficacy of Christ’s sacrifice for their salvation. Hence that the question of its validity is not a question of *non-essentials*—nor

of mere taste and preference ; but one of most vital interest to their souls ; identified with their dearest blessings and hopes—intervoven into the very texture of “the truth as it is in Jesus.” That instead of a cry for *popular* preaching, their prayer should be for *authoritative* preaching and *valid sacraments*—not for a pleasing speaker, nor an agreeable man ; but for “a man of God ;” one clothed with the authority and imbued with the spirit of Christ : who has power from Christ to lead them unto Christ—has received of the Holy Ghost to make them partakers of the Holy Ghost—been entrusted with the truth to guide them into all truth—made a steward of the manifold gifts of God, that they may be “furnished unto every good work ;” enabled “to perfect holiness in the fear of God.”

But to ensure, beloved brethren, a due recognition of our priestly character from our people, we have only to make them feel its necessity—to turn their attention from our claims to their own wants. The strongest argument for our office, will be urged by a voice within themselves : a voice sent forth from the convictions of an instructed conscience, from a clear view of their baptismal state—of the near relation in which they were placed to God and all holy beings—of the fearful gifts imparted to them—the strict account to be demanded of them : sent forth from an earnest spirit, striving for conformity with God ; desiring, above all things, the fellowship of Christ—the power of the Holy Ghost—the guardianship of angels—the

perfection of saints, the glories of Heaven. Sent forth from a heart trembling under the condemnation of sin ; pierced with a sense of having defiled the temple of the Holy Ghost, crucified the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. Sent forth from an understanding oppressed with the blindness of sin—with the convictions of stupidity and doubt, and delusion, and disorder, brought upon the soul by the power of pride, and envy, and anger, and lust, and covetousness, and gluttony, and sloth, with all their dismal train of consequent corruptions. Sent forth from the depths of the contrite spirit—of the trembling, prostrate soul, in tones of supplicating earnestness—“Sirs, what *must* I do to be saved?—What must I do to inherit eternal life?” ‘How shall I escape the curse of my broken vows? How propitiate the favor of Him, whose blood I have trampled under foot? How bring back to my wretched, helpless soul, the presence of that Spirit to whose blessed influence I have done such foul despite?’

When this voice, beloved, speaks within our people, then, and not till then, will they be found thanking God for the blessings of our ministry. For then, and not till then, will they discern the depth of their guilt, as unfaithful members of Christ’s body—discern how helpless and hopeless is their condition, as neglectors of the grace of baptism and violators of baptismal vows, without the extraordinary mercy which God has provided for them through “the ministry of reconciliation”—perceive the dreadful

hazard of that presumption which leads such neglectors and violators to trust for pardon to a vague and general repentance—a repentance not accepted by the representatives of Christ, who alone have charge of the discipline of his Church, or the power to remit and retain sins ; that presumption which boldly rushes to the mercy-seat of the temple which the priest himself dare not approach without the priestly sacrifice.

Be it, then, our first care, dear brethren, to place before our people with a distinctness not to be evaded, and an earnestness not to be withstood, *their real state “as members of Christ, and temples of the Holy Ghost !”* To teach them the true spiritual life, the peculiar danger of sin to the baptised, and the only way of escape from it. Teach them, as the Prayer Book teaches them, the real presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist—that therein they are made “partakers of His most blessed body and blood ;” and how earnest must be the preparation to receive such divine and glorious benefits ; and how devoted and self-sacrificing the love that is enkindled by a due sense of them ! what prompt and glad renunciation of the world, and what burning zeal for heaven, that love begets ! Be it our case to teach them this, in the spirit of our Master and the power of our office, and to teach it till they “mark, learn, and inwardly digest it ;” and we shall not find them loth to be led back to the almost forgotten privileges of “the one Catholic and Apostolic Church”—shall no longer see

them startled at things as *new*, which our forefathers cherished for being as old as the Christian faith. No longer see them guilty of irreverence to avoid the charge of superstition—see them shy of obedience, lest they trench upon the office of faith—suspicious of the daily prayers, lest they contract formality—afraid of the weekly communion, lest they lose a due sense of its dignity—shunning watching, and fasting, and self-mortification, lest they be led to afflict the body for the sin of the soul. In short, we shall no longer see them decry the power of the priesthood for fear of detracting from the honor of Him who gave that power, and commanded its faithful use for His glory and man's salvation. For then there will be a humility shrinking from self—a sense of danger flying to every appointed refuge—an earnestness seizing upon every offered help—a “hungering and thirsting after righteousness,” demanding every divine provision—an obedience fearing the loss of eternal life—a heavenly-mindedness, dreading the influence of the world—a spirit of holiness yearning for the fellowship of God and His saints—a divine charity, “believing all things, hoping all things, enduring all things, and never failing.” Then distrust will give place to confidence—jealousy to hearty goodwill—thanks to reproaches—the “deaf ear” to an open heart—the shyness of servitude to the boldness of true sonship—a contentious reason to an obedient faith—an earth-bound sense to an earnest soaring spirit. Then there will be no fear of man to bring

us into a snare—no temptation from without to hide our talent, to withhold our priestly powers ; for then the teaching of the Holy Ghost will go before our own—will awaken a conviction of want in our people, that must open our eyes to our stewardship—impel them to a struggle with the enemy that must rebuke our cowardice and call us up to their aid—beget in them a demand to be led onward and upward in the narrow way to eternal life, that cannot fail to prompt us to our work, and inspire us with an awful sense of our responsibility as Priests in the Church of the living God.

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